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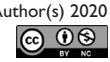

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When did 1989 end?

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Abstract

As with the 1968 movements in Western Europe and North America and their long-lasting subterranean effects, one can also ask when 1989 ended. A quick answer to the title question would be Christmas 1989, with the execution of the Ceauşescus, or New Year, with the installation of Václav Havel as President. Another would be December 1991, the date of the dissolution of the USSR, which would be more relevant for the post-Soviet space and could perhaps also work as a rough marker for the more protracted political transitions in Romania and Bulgaria. Another would be 2004, with the accession to the European Union of much of post-communist Europe and the prospect of extension of happy-ever-after member-statehood to the south and east. More seriously, we might listen to the calls from a number of experts to stop speaking of the region as post-communist or post-socialist. I suggest that what has ended is the 'end of history,' as the victory of democracy turns out for the moment to be one of post-democracy and xenophobic populism across Europe and more widely.

Keywords

democracy, populism, post-communism, 1989 revolutions

Résumé

Comme ce fut le cas pour les mouvements de 1968 en Europe de l'Ouest et en Amérique du Nord, qui ont eu des conséquences durables, aux effets latents, on peut aussi se demander comment 1989 s'est terminée. On pourrait répondre rapidement à la question posée par le titre de cet article en affirmant que 1989 s'est terminée pendant la période de Noël 1989, avec l'exécution des Ceaușescu, ou lors du Nouvel An, avec l'accès de Václav Havel à la présidence. On pourrait aussi dire que 1989 s'est terminée en décembre 1991, lors de la dissolution de l'URSS, ce qui constituerait une réponse plus pertinente pour l'espace post-soviétique et pourrait aussi peut-être représenter un marqueur approximatif pour les transitions politiques plus longues en Roumanie et en Bulgarie. On pourrait également argumenter que 1989 s'est achevée en

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2004, avec l'intégration dans l'Union Européenne d'une grande partie de l'Europe post-communiste, et la perspective d'une extension au sud et à l'est du statut de membre, qui constituerait un « happy-end » pour ces nouveaux adhérents. Plus sérieusement, l'on pourrait écouter les appels d'un certain nombre d'experts demandant à ce que l'on arrête de désigner cette région comme post-communiste ou post-socialiste. Je suggère que ce qui est bel et bien terminé, c'est la « fin de l'histoire », puisque la victoire de la démocratie semble pour le moment n'être que celle d'une post-démocratie et d'un populisme xénophobe à travers l'Europe et au-delà.

Mots-clés
démocratie, populisme, post-communisme, révolutions de 1989

To say that 1989 is an iconic date is an understatement. A recent book edited by Martin Conway et al. (2017) makes it the starting point for writing history backwards, to the two other post-war years of 1918 and 1945. The editors rightly question the tendency to see the post-1989 period as 'part of a separate story' from the rest of the twentieth century. Conway concedes that seeing 1989 as a *revolutionary* period would suggest a comparison with '1917–1919, 1936 or 1968.' An earlier edited volume by Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney (2004) on *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* also put 1989 into an appropriate context. Going further back, we might see 1848 as the most appropriate comparator, when the 'peoples' spring' had very diverse effects across Europe. As in 1989, these were also often paradoxical, in that, as many historians have stressed, the original protagonists were displaced by rivals or enemies, who ultimately implemented some of the goals advanced in 1848.

As Agnes Heller (2012: 55) wrote, 'The collapse of the communist regime was the last great turning point in the history of the twentieth century.' More speculatively, Jacques Rupnik (2013: 7) wrote, 'Though originating in Europe – the initial core of the cold-war system – it may have been the last time Europe constituted the center-stage of a world event.' I shall discuss later in more detail the related question *where* 1989 ended, but if we consider the Marxist-Leninist political model as a unity, as Heller implied in the quotation above, the answer can only be that 1989 has not (yet) ended in Belarus, China, (North) Korea, Laos and Vietnam. I remember a meeting at Sussex in early 1990, when the leader of a visiting Chinese delegation firmly assured us, before I could summon up the courage to ask the obvious question, that what had just happened in Europe had *no* relevance to the situation in China.[1] She was right. As Rupnik (2013: 7) continued: 'What was seen at the time as setting China at odds with the democratic tide of 1989 is in retrospect perceived in Asia as the opening of China's spectacular rise on the international scene as an economic and strategic superpower.'

Before asking when '1989' *ended*, we should consider when it *began*. To go back to 1953 in Germany, 1956 in Hungary and Poland or 1968 in Czechoslovakia would be stretching a point, but the founding of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) in Poland in 1976 and of Solidarity in 1980 are a more plausible starting point, despite the hiatus of martial law in the early 1980s. There was also a substantial opening to the world economy in Hungary and to a lesser extent in other countries, which paved the way for

later developments. Besnik Pula (2018: 2–3) argues that with this proto-globalization 'the prevailing feature of present-day Central and East European economies, their reliance on FDI [foreign direct investment] and the depth of the transnational integration of their key industries, was a process whose development was laid out during institutional reforms these states undertook in the 1970s and 1980s, as they attempted to gain access to, and better integrate with, Western trade, finance, and production.'

Could '1989' have come earlier or later? While the Soviet Union (and its empire) *did* survive until 1984 (Amalrik, 1970), it was on the slide soon thereafter (Yurchak, 2005). In 1988, Timothy Garton Ash envisaged a process of Ottomanization: 'A long, slow process of imperial decline in the course of which one would see an unplanned, piecemeal, and discontinuous emancipation, both of the constituent states from the imperial centre and of societies from states.' (Garton Ash, 1989: 228) Could it have hung on for another decade, making the sort of authoritarian transition that Mexico had done (and as many people expected)[2] or later China? On balance I think it probably could have. As long as the Brezhnev doctrine prevailed, there was little hope for members of the bloc going it alone, despite the precedents in Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania, and serious obstacles to coordinated action. More substantial change would have had to be initiated or at least tolerated by the USSR. (It is probably significant that one of Gorbachev's friends as a student was Zdeněk Mlynář, who was prominent in 1968 – see Gorbachev & Mlynář, 2002.)

Theories of industrial society (Aron, 1962) and their bolder siblings, convergence theories, suggested something of this kind (Outhwaite & Ray, 2005: 67–69). However, as Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller and György Márkus (1984: 297) argued, independent organizations faced at best co-optation and 'degeneration,' at worst repression from inside the country and/or outside. There seemed no way to break the cycle of dissidence and repression. And what Fehér et al. (1984: 152) wrote of de-Stalinization remained relevant afterwards: 'The vehemence of de-Stalinization, the persisting investigation of crimes, endangered traditional legitimation, for it could bring into question the leaders' right to rule.'

The other possibility is that 1989 could have come earlier, for example in 1968. This might have produced Keynesian market economies with a chance to bed in before the oil crisis of 1973 sent Western countries in a neoliberal direction. What in the USSR was in 1977 officially called 'advanced' or 'developed' (razvitoye) socialist society (a term used earlier for a decade or more (Lavigne, 1978)), and described retrospectively (by Mikhail Gorbachev) as the Brezhnevite 'time of stagnation' (period zastoya) was well consolidated, with industrialization and modernization substantially completed and little to be expected from the system except more of the same.[3] In the light of Western economic policy trends, Thatcherism and Reaganomics, 1989–1991 was arguably the worst time for transition, with neoliberalism, in Paul Betts' ironical phrase, 'as the guiding liberation theology of economic managers and policy-makers' (Betts, 2019: 289). As Tony Judt (2010: 2) wrote:

> Much of what appears 'natural' today dates from the 1980s: the obsession with wealth creation, the cult of privatization and the private sector, the growing disparities between rich and poor. And above all the rhetoric which accompanies these: uncritical admiration for unfettered markets, disdain for the public sector, the delusion of endless growth.

It is not surprising that these ideas appealed to post-communist elites impatient to get the train moving again.[4]

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As with the '1968' movements in Western Europe and North America and their long-lasting cultural and political effects, one can ask the same question about the 1989 revolutions. A quick answer to my title question would be Christmas 1989, with the execution of the Ceauşescus, or New Year a week later, with the installation of Václav Havel as President. Another would be December 1991, the date of the dissolution of the USSR, which would be more relevant for the post-Soviet space and could perhaps also work as a rough marker for the more protracted political transitions in Romania and Bulgaria. Another would be 2004, with the accession to the European Union of much of post-communist Europe and the prospect of extension of 'happy-ever-after' member-statehood to the south and east. Again, as with 1968, it is more appropriate to speak of 'the 1989 years.' The fixation on the fall of the Berlin Wall, which justifiably annoys Poles and Hungarians, is symptomatic of a triumphalism which sees the situation as basically sorted out by January 1990. This is reinforced by the tendency of the academic literature to concentrate on the Visegrád countries (Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) and the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), rather than the messier developments elsewhere in the former bloc.

We are often told that one of the weaknesses of the social sciences is the impossibility of conducting meaningful experiments, but the imposition in the late 1940s across half of Europe of a Soviet political and economic model and its replacement in the 1990s is a reasonable approximation to this aspiration. When I took up this theme in my *Europe Since 1989. Transitions and Transformations* (Outhwaite, 2016), I came to the same conclusion as had Montesquieu (1748: book 26, chapter 2) of the importance of the interplay of long-term tendencies and chance events.

A few examples are perhaps enough here to illustrate this interplay. In Czechoslovakia, which had applied a highly orthodox model of central planning and, after 1969, political repression, one might expect the transition to capitalist democracy to have been more problematic than in Poland or Hungary, with their somewhat more liberal regimes and more tolerated civil societies. In fact, the *longue durée* of forty years of communism was trumped by the longer-term effects of a brief democratic past between the wars and, earlier still, industrialization of part of the country and a history of passive resistance to powerful neighboring states. Something like Garton Ash's 1989 prophecy came true:

> If ever a real thaw comes – from above? after change in Moscow? – they will be ready with their busts of Tomas Masaryk, their editions of Franz Kafka and their memorials to Jan Palach. They know from their own experience in 1968, and from the Polish experience in 1980-81, how suddenly a society that seems atomised, apathetic and broken can be transformed into an articulate, united civil society. How private opinion can become public opinion. How a nation can stand on its feet again. (Garton Ash, 1989: 63)

Czechoslovakia also however illustrates the impact of surprise events, with the 'velvet divorce' of 1993 followed by a reversion to authoritarian rule in Slovakia until 1998.

Yugoslavia might have been expected to have a smooth transition, outside the Soviet sphere, with a decentralized economy under managerial control dressed up as self-management, and Josip Broz Tito's death in 1980 having failed to produce the expected dislocation. As it turned out, only Slovenia escaped the horror intact. At the other extreme, after the break-up of the Soviet Union, transition remains stalled in Belarus for the foreseeable future.

Bulgaria and Romania also differ from the Visegrád pattern. Just as Bulgaria had cultivated a local version of the slogan of perestroika, so it ploughed its own erratic version of democratic transition. By the end of December 1989, Todor Zhivkov was gone, but it took another year and massive protests to establish a more stable democratic system, with the re-badged communists still in power for much of the following decade and serious problems with organized crime, including communist state security survivals. (Ray, 1996: 223; Outhwaite & Ray, 2005: 80–85) The protests continue (Stoyanova, 2018) and Bulgaria came top of the EU member states for corruption in 2018.

Romania, unlike loyal Bulgaria, had broken away from the Soviet sphere of influence in the mid-1960s, though with a much more repressive and arbitrary regime. As in Bulgaria, there was essentially a palace coup in 1989. Tom Gallagher, the author of a major book on Romania (Gallagher, 2005) wrote that: 'By 1990, it was starting to become clear that a primary goal of the new regime was to rule out any normalisation of conditions along recognisably Western pluralist lines'. (Gallagher, 2012: 527) The macabre Christmas present of the Ceauşescus' rushed execution was not of equivalent significance to Havel's new year present of the presidency. Gallagher speaks of two lost decades. Even the run-up to EU accession in 2007, along with Bulgaria, did not massively improve the situation, with the EU making the best of a bad job and often turning a blind eye to problems which might one day be resolved. Even if, as Ken Jowitt suggested (and I agree), EU accession was the best news in the region for five hundred years,[5] it has not been a panacea. Romania however, where an independent civil society had developed impressively in the 2010s, also produced a surprise with the election in November 2014 of Klaus Iohannis as President, resulting in greater momentum behind efforts to clean up the problem of corruption.

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One way or another, we need to consider the calls from a number of experts to stop speaking of the region as post-communist or post-socialist, just as we no longer speak of post-Fascist Italy or post-Nazi Germany. When Larry Ray and I published our book in 2005 (Outhwaite & Ray, 2005), we already confronted this question,[6] and it has recently been raised again by Martin Müller (2019) and by Jan Zielonka (2019) and others in *Eurozine.* Müller's concept of post-socialism is more theoretically loaded than most, but his objections to its continued use form a useful framework. First, the over-emphasis on rupture and the open future.[7] Müller's stress on the diversity or multiplicity of post-socialist states is well taken, but I am less convinced by his conclusion that post-socialism is a 'disappearing object.' Even in Berlin, where much of the East looks more modern

than the rather tatty West, it is not difficult to see the patterns of the old GDR. I would rather stress the *unevenness* of the post-socialist visual, political and everyday-life landscape.

The critique of what Müller, following John Agnew, calls 'the territorial trap,' can also be over-stated. The suggestion that the further you go east of Berlin, the less you find signs of transition, was always of course a simplification, as evidenced for example by the Baltic states, but it retains some explanatory power (see Møller, 2009). 'Orientalizing' the east of Europe is certainly a trap into which many Western observers have fallen, and the neglect of 'Eastern' scholarship in the over-professionalized and Western-centered global academic scene is a continuing problem. Chris Hann's focus on Eurasia as a unit of reference is also a welcome counter to hasty border-drawing. The current extension of transport links by China and the growing recognition of existing informal networks of East-West trade (see Marsden, 2017; Marsden & Henig, 2019) demonstrate the relevance of such an approach.

This raises the issue of what Ken Jowitt (1992) labeled 'Leninist legacies' and the path dependence of the post-communist condition. As I noted in my book on *Europe Since 1989* (Outhwaite, 2016), there are two images associated with path dependence. One is the idea of irreversible choices, as in the 'point of no return' in aviation. The other is that of the 'path well-trodden' and therefore easier to travel along. Post-communism involved both forms. Some choices, such as privatization, were more or less irreversible, or at least difficult to reverse. Others, such as the return to authoritarian rule in Slovakia after 1993 and its reversal in 1998, were more subject to immediate political contingencies. Russia is of course the country where observers are understandably divided over the prospects for the restoration of democracy, as against a *longue durée* scenario in which Russia inevitably reverts to authoritarianism. There has been a tendency to extend this deterministic model to Eastern and Central Europe, in the light of worrying developments in Poland and Hungary, but similar trends in Austria and Italy, and perhaps in a post-Brexit UK or (more likely) England, undermine such stereotyping of the 'East.'[8]

The other image, that of the well-trodden path, opens up another important trope in the analysis of post-communism: the idea of imitation most fully analyzed by Wade Jacoby (2000; 2002; 2004) in his image of 'ordering from the menu.' Much of this was ordered ordering, in the sense of persuasive advice, however misguided, from outside experts,[9] or later the requirements of EU accession. I agree with the critique by Aleida Assmann (2019) in *Merkur* of the current over-emphasis on 'imitation' of the West and its current rejection (Krastev & Holmes, 2019).[10] This is to over-simplify a much more complex pattern of interplay between ideas and practices with different origins: 'it constructs a narrative that encloses everything and passes over what might build bridges and mediate between East and West.'

Rather more problematically, I think, Müller (2019: 13) concludes that: 'The end of socialism does not mean the end of difference, but that the difference we see is no longer owing to a socialist past'. Here again I would say that it may or may not be, depending on where you look. The past is partly past and partly not.[11] Inheritance, genetic or of property, can be latent as well as obvious; sometimes effaced and sometimes not. Pula (2018: 168) implies a possible end point for '1989' when he stresses the differences between the 1990s and the early 2000s: 'While legacy factors were causally significant during the early

reform period, [...] political factors ultimately determined the direction of postsocialist development and international market specialization.'

What has certainly ended, I suggest, is the end of history. Francis Fukuyama's brilliantly timed article in the summer of 1989 and his subsequent book succumbed not so much to Huntington's rather hysterical *Clash of Civilizations* in 1996 as to the realization that the victory of democracy had become one of what Colin Crouch in 2004 called post-democracy. Populism and cultural conservatism or cultural counter-revolution have sprung up everywhere, as Zielonka (2019) has rightly stressed; he suggests that 'the most significant fault-lines in today's Europe' are between 'states exposed to refugee flows' and those which are not, between creditor and debtor states in the Eurozone and 'between states governed by illiberal parties, and states where populists are still kept at bay.'[12]

What then has gone wrong, and is there anything specific to distinguish states where the 1989 years were crucial from those like the United Kingdom where they were just dates? One difference might be the persistence of a 'kto kovo' (who [dominates] whom) mode of politics, stripped of some of the niceties and 'political correctness' which can be found in the better parts of the West. Aviezer Tucker (2015: 232) suggests going below this political difference to the weakness of liberal institutions and the rule of law after 1989.

> The original sin of the transition from totalitarianism was the failure to construct liberal institutions. The small illiberalism at the very beginning, the scarcity of justice that has not been remedied, led through corrupt political democracy to the larger populist illiberalism that emerged following the economic recession.

Despite his somewhat inflated use of totalitarianism, he rightly stresses the difference between regimes with at least totalitarian aspirations and other forms of authoritarianism, and their lasting effects decades later.

A further aspect which is largely specific to the post-communist region is the problematic past of some surviving politicians. Whereas current Western politicians may be threatened or brought down by the revelation of financial or sexual scandals in their remote past, those further east may be exposed as possible collaborators with the secret police or other communist authorities. Even Lech Wałęsa has been suspected of this, on the basis of a document he signed while under interrogation. In a context where the truth of the matter is inevitably hard to ascertain, the possibility has been enthusiastically exploited by the PiS regime. The uneven way in which 'lustration' was practiced in the years immediately following 1989 (David, 2011; Outhwaite, 2016: 19–23) leaves many stones unturned.

Another substantial difference, as noted earlier, might be the differential impact of the neoliberalism which had become established in the West but, like other diseases, was more drastic in its impact on societies which confronted it for the first time. Privatization, for example, which seemed merely contentious in a country like the UK where public services, though run-down and poorly managed, operated much more cheaply than their privatized successors, had a clearer rationale in the East, where its dysfunctions, though more extreme and often criminal, were more easily overlooked.

In relation to Hungary, a country which he has studied throughout his career, Chris Hann (2019) has advanced an argument which has a more general application. It is, in summary, that liberal urban intellectuals have ignored the concerns of the victims of neoliberal policies. In the post-communist region, this can be given a further twist with the claim that '1989' was not properly implemented, thus animating policies which combine nativist nationalism with generous social measures and a generally 'leftish' approach to economic policy (Buštikova, 2018).

The fact that a critique along these lines was also ventriloquized by Theresa May in the party conference speech written by her then puppet-master Nick Timothy (who was something like the equivalent of Steve Bannon for Donald Trump and Dominic Cummings for Boris Johnson) does not mean that we can afford to ignore it in the West as well. If antisemitism is, as August Bebel and other social democrats said, 'the socialism of fools,' a broader-spectrum populist xenophobia seems set to be one, if not the most popular, contemporary version of socialism across much of the developed world, and has not been taken seriously enough. It may of course fizzle out, just as the British disaster has weakened hostility to the EU across the continent. Most worrying, perhaps, is evidence that the radical right, at least in Western Europe, has a growing appeal for younger populations and for the 'sexually-modern nativists' (Spierings et al., 2017) who, according to Lancaster (2019: 14), now make up nearly half of radical right supporters:

> Sexually-modern nativists hold progressive stances on the T questions on tradition, gender and LGBT rights, support strong government, and are strongly opposed to immigration and European integration. They are younger, more highly educated, and more likely to be female compared with other radical right supporters.

In post-communist Europe, radical right parties may not yet have shifted their approach towards this cohort as much as in the West (where some, like the Lijst Pim Fortuyn and its successor, the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), began with this orientation). Overall, however, it fits what Cynthia Miller Idriss (2017), in her book on Germany, called 'The Extreme Gone Mainstream.'[13] This is particularly prominent in post-communist Europe where, as Buštikova (2018: 575) stressed, radical right and mainstream parties coexist more often: 'If there is a reversal in liberal democratic governance in Eastern Europe, it will most likely be initiated not by a small radical party but by a large radicalized mainstream party'. This has now of course come to pass in Poland and Hungary, where homophobic government propaganda still seems to be paying off well in election results, despite the broader pattern of modernization of attitudes.[14] In Poland, for instance, the proportion opposed to the toleration of homosexuality has shrunk from 41% in 2001 to 24% in 2019, while those finding it 'something normal' have increased from 5% to 14%.[15] There remains however a remarkable East-West difference on this issue, with over 80% accepting it in the West (except in Italy, where the figure was only 75%), as against a bare majority in the Czech Republic and much lower figures elsewhere in the East.[16]

The question of how we can confront the nativist populist challenge raises a set of difficult dilemmas. The way not to do it, I think, is symbolized by the British Labour Party's disgraceful mug design in 2015 with the slogan 'Controls on immigration. I'm voting Labour.'[17] This revamped version of post-social-democracy with a national

flavor (let us not, or at least not yet, call it national socialism) is not helpful. The answer for Europe, I suggest, can only be a European one. The migration panic of the mid-twenty-teens (Menjívar, Ruiz & Ness, 2019) was modulated differently in post-communist Europe, where labor migration had been rare, but it is not essentially different, despite 'relatively higher levels of aggregate xenophobia' (Buštikova, 2018: 571). Nor is the cult of 'sovereignty' (which also animated support for the British Conservatives' secessionist conspiracy), despite the background of Soviet hegemony which has given it some additional momentum in the post-communist region. Here, sovereigntist social conservatives will no doubt continue to try to square the circle of the EU membership on which they depend and their nationalist and nativist desires. Looking on the bright side, we could remember that the fear in the years after 1992 of a nationalist fragmentation of post-communist Europe (including the former USSR) have not materialized. The Czecho-Slovak divorce may have been a pity, but it was not a disaster (or at least not for long in the Slovak case).

We can debate whether the EU could have mitigated the damage in the post-communist region by opening up more readily (as it still hesitates to do in the western Balkans) and/or by a more critical attitude to the fads of neoliberalism and austerity policies. In the present situation it seems clear that defending the rule of law, freedom of the press and free movement is the best we can hope for in both 'East' and 'West.' Either way, 'we are all in this together' and in this sense 1989 is over, though not, I hope, the liberal ideals in the 'East' as well as the 'West' which inspired 1989. Reflecting on the twentieth anniversary, Vladimir Tismăneanu (2012: 16) wrote:

> The fact that the aftermath of these revolutions has been plagued by ethnic rivalries, unsavory political bickering, rampant political and economic corruption, and the rise of illiberal parties and movements [. . .] does not diminish their generous message and colossal impact.

As the Hungarian philosopher Gáspár Miklós Tamás recently said in an interview in the *Amnesty Journal*, it is wrong to say that the change in the system came from outside and from above:

> Although it was not the work of the whole people, we were two or three million people, there were clubs, debates, assemblies, demonstrations, an unbelievable effervescence in society. This untamed desire for freedom in 1989, this pathos of freedom, that was a moment of very great beauty. That remains. (Tamás, quoted in Verseck, 2018)

1989 was in some ways a utopian project, longed for over decades in more or less hopeless circumstances, punctuated by a few abrupt explosions of hope followed by disappointment. The revival of civil society was real, though it remains weak in the region in comparison to Western Europe and the idea that it could sustain a new form of political community, rather than one at best resembling Western democracy, proved to be an illusion. Former political elites could often be recycled, changing 'communist' to 'socialist,' dropping the reference to 'workers' or, as in the German CDU, escaping even the need to change their party label. If there was a possible third way, it did not find many keen to take it.

In other ways, however, it was the *opposite* of a utopian project, unless the aspiration to live along with the rest of Europe under 'normal' conditions is utopian. Jeffrey Isaac (2012: 562) recalls Adam Michnik's declaration that 'gray is beautiful' (Michnik, 1998: 326–327). In Michnik's words:

> Dictatorships, whether red or black, destroy the human capacity for creation [. . .] only gray democracy, with its human rights and institutions of civil society, can replace weapons with arguments [. . .] That is why we say, gray is beautiful.

It is easy to understand the suspicion of 'experiments' in the 1989 years, perhaps most starkly illustrated in the GDR's self-dissolution in the Federal Republic. The most prominent utopian element was perhaps what Zaki Laïdi (2013: 34) called a 'philosophy of immediacy': the idea of an express route to democracy and Western capitalism.

Ivan Krastev (2013: 53) suggested that the equation of democracy with good governance and prosperity by 'the ideologues of normality' may have sown the seeds of later disillusionment.

> By declaring democracy as the normal state of society and restricting democratization to an imitation of the institutions and practices of developed democracies, Central Europe's ideology of normality failed to give rein to the creative tensions that do so much to supply democracy with its flexibility and endurance. The tensions between democratic majoritarianism and liberal constitutionalism [. . .] are not transitional 'growing pains,' but lie at the very heart of democratic politics.

Krastev and Holmes (2019: 5) restate this thesis: 'The very conceit that 'there is no other way' provided an independent motive for the wave of populist xenophobia and reactionary nativism that began in Central and Eastern Europe and is now washing across much of the world.' As Krastev put it in an interview: 'The idea that we don't have to copy, that we have our own ways, is crucial to the political language of Viktor Orbán and Jaroslaw Kaczynski.'[18]

The collapse of the apparently stable political cultures of the United Kingdom and the United States in the face of the Brexit referendum and the Trump presidency, and the rise of authoritarianism in Italy and Austria, are a warning against facile orientalizing, especially in relation to the Balkans. (The Western European political imaginary has not distinguished itself in its treatment of Turkey, which seems now consigned to an authoritarian future outside the EU far more dangerous for itself and the region than that which threatens the post-Brexit UK.)

Rupnik (2013: 22–23) linked 1989 to the beginning of 'three cycles' in the recent world history: the global expansion of 'unfettered free markets,' leading to the continuing economic crisis of capitalism, the rise of Asia and the end of the Cold War initiating a cycle of global cosmopolitan interdependence which is also coming to an end (more clearly now than in 2013). He concluded that 'any search for alternatives, the recasting of a public conversation, has to start with a reflection about the promises and illusions, the achievements and dead ends of 1989.' The 'ideas of 1989,' like the 'ideas of 1968,' will inevitably come to lose their identity as they become part of our shared past and

political culture and a focus of nostalgia or, as for they are for Putin and were for Sarkozy respectively, rejection. Who can remember, for example, when the first mobile phones came into use and when people apparently talking to themselves in the street might actually be yuppies rather than drunk or mentally ill? Dates like 1968 and 1989, however misleadingly precise as a designation of periods lasting several years, remain as important markers of historical turning-points.

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Notes

1. For an analysis of the Russian and Chinese situations see Tucker, 2010; also Spohr, 2019.
2. Bogdan Denitch (1990: 128) also predicted this for the period after 1989: 'The post-Communist politics of Eastern Europe will in many ways resemble Mexico, with all the present features of corporatism, corruption, a dynamic private sector, a multitude of political parties, most of which have no effective access to power or broad support.' For a rightly sceptical view of the prospects of Mexicanization in China, see Goldstein, 1995: 1129–1130.
3. At a conference I attended in Poland in 1988 a participant came back chuckling from buying a newspaper. He had asked the seller what's new and she had replied that there'd been nothing new for forty years.
4. A joke of the time suggested that, whereas the Stalinist response to a broken-down train would have been to shoot the driver, the modern alternative was for the passengers to jiggle about and *pretend* the train was moving again.
5. Cited by Tismăneanu (2012: 24).
6. A reviewer commented ironically on the connotations of the term 'post-communism' in Poland, and the Chinese translation avoided using it.
7. As Ray and I (Outhwaite & Ray, 2005: 3) wrote, in a sentence kindly quoted by Müller (2019: 8): '. . .so much fell into rather conventional [. . .] patterns.'
8. A special issue of *Government and Opposition* (2017) rightly covers both East and West.
9. Janine Wedel (1998: 44) included the brilliant cartoon in which an economic consultant phones his partner to say that the firm has asked him to go to Poland to privatise the economy and that he will be back in a few days.
10. Krastev and Holmes (2019: 193) do however note the difference between the forms of imitation: 'conversion' in Central Europe (with a subsequent anti-Western backlash), simulation or imposture in Russia and borrowing or appropriation in China.
11. For example, see: Tucker, 2015; Ágh, 2019; Krastev & Holmes, 2019; and https://www.eurozine.com/the-future-was-next-to-you/ Although Ágh does not directly address the question of the end of the 1989 process, the implication of his analysis is clearly that it is not yet complete; he endorses Dahrendorf's estimate that this would take 60 years.

12. For a defence of some aspects of populism against the 'liberal consensus,' see Stoyanova 2018.
13. See also Miller Idriss, 2018.
14. *The Guardian*, 25 October, 2019, p. 32: 'LGBT activists warned of push to stoke fears across eastern Europe'. See also *POLEN-ANALYSEN* 244, 22 October 2019, p.12: https://www.laender-analysen.de/polen-analysen/244/PolenAnalysen244.pdf
15. *POLEN-ANALYSEN* 244, 22 October 2019, p.12: https://www.laender-analysen.de/polen-analysen/244/PolenAnalysen244.pdf
16. See: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/10/15/european-public-opinion-three-decades-after-the-fall-of-communism/
17. See: https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/03/labours-anti-immigrant-mug-worst-part-it-isnt-gaffe
    For a more recent German example, see: https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000097675822/Linksliberale-Ueberheblichkeit-geht-mir-auf-die-Nerven
    For a useful critique of such thinking, see Colin Crouch: https://www.socialeurope.eu/why-the-left-must-resist-wanting-a-piece-of-the-xenophobic-action
18. In the *Eurozine* interview (28 November 2019) cited above (see note 11): https://www.eurozine.com/the-future-was-next-to-you/

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